



2021-22 School Assignment Policy

To: Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D. Superintendent

From: Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity and Engagement Officer

Date: March 12, 2021

Re: Recommendation for 2021-22 School Assignment Policy

Attached please find the recommended 2021-22 School Assignment Policy which delineates the process for next year's kindergarten students and students new to the school district. This policy includes the recommendations discussed at the Equity Subcommittee Meeting which includes the following:

1. Revise school placement weights and closely monitor the balance of diverse students across school placement
 - ie. proximity to school, race/ethnicity, gender, economic status and language
2. Revise lottery placement weights
 - Consider factors other than solely "siblings"
3. Implement the city-wide lotteries at several points throughout the year with full school placement targeted for mid-August
 - ie. Elementary School Kindergarten Class – at least 50% lottery placement in June, at least 25% in July, remaining % in August
4. Begin the "first-come, first-served" assignment process after mid-August
5. Communicate to incoming kindergarten families that the middle school feeder pattern is under review.

LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT POLICY File: JCA

All students in grades pre-school to grade 12 enroll at the Family Resource Center. This policy outlines assignment criteria unique to pre-school, grades kindergarten to 8, and high school (grades 9-12).

Kindergarten through Grade 8

To ensure equity in the Lowell Public Schools for all students, students will be assigned to a school in Kindergarten through Grade 8 based on the following placement criteria:

1. Space Availability - space available in a particular school, program or grade is defined according to the policy in effect as to class size.
2. Sibling Preference - all students whose parents make timely application to a particular school and already have other children attending that school are given priority of assignment for that school.
3. Diversity Balance - new assignments and transfers must meet requirements of diversity balance. As relates to minority/non-minority balance, the goal is to achieve a balance within each school, program and grade that reflects, within 10% above or below, the ethnicity percentage of the zone. In addition, other factors which contribute to a school's diversity will be considered such as gender, language and economic status.
4. Place of Residence (proximity of residence to school) - all other priorities being equal, the student living within the school neighborhood street directory as defined by the Transportation Department has priority of assignment for that school.

The placement criteria above will be the primary criteria for all placements and transfers for Kindergarten through Grade 8 under this policy.

Kindergarten Registration and Lottery

Students may attend kindergarten in the Lowell Public Schools (LPS) if they are 5 on or before September 1st.

Annually, the LPS will hold a pre-registration period for kindergarten in the spring. Pre-registration takes place at the Family Resource Center and the dates of pre-registration will be announced on the district website, Facebook page, Twitter and other means of communication no later than April 12.

All families are encouraged to enroll for Kindergarten during the pre-registration period. For schools where there are more pre-registration requests than seats available, a lottery will be held. The kindergarten lottery will be held no later than June 18 and the lottery will determine registration and initial waitlist placement. The date of the lottery will be published on the district website, Facebook page, Twitter and other means of communication no later than May 1st and the results of the lottery will be published online following the date of the lottery.

To ensure greater equity and access to choices across the district, school assignment lotteries will be held at several points throughout the year with full school placement targeted for mid-August. This applies only for schools where demand for seats (early applications) exceeds the number of seats available.

The first lottery will seek to fill at least 50% of the kindergarten seats. The second lottery will fill the next 25% of seats, and the final lottery will fill the remaining percentage of open seats prior to mid-August.

The lottery will be a weighted lottery with the following priorities: siblings, McKinney-Vento status, race/ethnicity (for schools whose enrollment are above or below the targeted minority/non-minority balance of the zone).

For schools where no lottery is required, seats will be filled incrementally throughout the summer taking into account the ethnicity/racial, gender and linguistic balance, and economic balance.

Transportation

During the pandemic, the district instituted a temporary transportation policy. Beginning in the 2021 school year, the district will utilize the previous policy from 2019-20 unless a new policy is adopted for the 2021-22 school year.

Grades 1-8 Transfer Applications and Lottery

All families are encouraged to submit transfer requests for the subsequent school year during the transfer pre-registration period. Pre-registration takes place at the Family Resource Center and the dates of pre-registration will be announced on the district website, Facebook page, Twitter and other means of communication no later than April 12.

For schools where there are more pre-registration transfer requests than seats available, a lottery will be held. The transfer lottery will be held no later than July 2 and the lottery will determine the first round of transfer placements and initial waitlist placement.

The lottery will be a weighted lottery with the following priorities: siblings, McKinney-Vento status, race/ethnicity (for schools whose enrollment are above or below the targeted minority/non-minority balance within each zone).

For schools where no lottery is required, seats will be filled incrementally throughout the summer taking into account the ethnicity/racial, gender and linguistic balance, and economic balance.

All transfer applications received AFTER the published early-registration period will be placed on a waitlist on a first-come first-served basis.

All students who are currently on transfer wait lists for the 2019-2020 school year and prior years will remain on the waitlist per the 2019-2020 school assignment policy. All new transfer requests for the 2020-2021 school year and beyond will follow the rules and procedures of the 2020-2021 school assignment policy.

Private, parochial or charter school students

Students attending private, parochial or charter schools and who are seeking placement in the Lowell Public Schools, must register beginning April 1st if they desire placement in the subsequent school year. Students who register for but fail to attend the Lowell Public Schools will be removed from all waitlists at the time they are discharged from active status in the Student Information Management System.

Waitlist

At the time of registration, the parent/guardian will be asked to indicate three (3) school choices in order of preference. Students who are not assigned to their first choice school will be placed on one waitlist based on their second and third school choices at the time of registration.

Students on the waitlist from 2019-2020 shall have priority over newly enrolled students to the school system when determining placement. Routine placements from the waitlist will be made beginning on July 2 and continue until August 13th, to be effective the subsequent school year. During peak registration times, from August 13th through September 17th, the Family Resource Center will make every effort to give priority to students on the waitlist. The Family Resource Center will cease making placements from the waitlist for the current school year following the 20th day of school.

Students must be pre-registered (before August 13th) or active students in the Lowell Public Schools to remain on the waitlist.

The adult listed as the primary contact in the Student Information Management System will be notified by the Family Resource Center by telephone if their child is eligible for a transfer off of the waitlist.

In the event the primary contact cannot be reached, the Family Resource Center shall notify the second contact listed for the student, provided that the second contact is listed as residing with the student and is listed as a custodial parent or legal guardian.

Except during the peak times of August 2nd to the last day of transfers, families have forty-eight hours (two business days) to accept the transfer. After forty-eight (48) hours, if the family has not accepted the transfer assignment, the student will be removed from the waitlist for that school. During peak times, seats cannot be held. The Family Resource Center will make reasonable attempts to contact families to accept placement from the waitlist. Families will be asked to accept placement at the time they are called from the Family Resource

If parents anticipate being away during the summer, they must submit via email their contact information to the Family Resource Center Coordinator. Families are responsible for maintaining current mailing addresses and phone numbers on file with the Lowell Public Schools in the Student Information Management System.

Beginning with the 2020-21 school year, the waitlists will initially be generated by a lottery. Students already on the waitlist from the 2019-20 school year will be grandfathered until the terminal grade for which the student is currently waitlisted at a family's request.

After the 2019-20 waitlist transfer deadline, all students will be removed from the waitlist and a new lottery will be held annually for grades K-8. Families may request to be in the lottery for the upcoming school year by coming to the Family Resource Center by a date that will be published no later than March 1st. The lottery for grades 1-8 will be held by the end of May each year.

Publishing the Waitlist

The district will publish, on the district website, a graph representing the number of students on each school's waitlist. The district will also provide family members with information regarding their child's placement on the waitlist, either through a list of student identification numbers, or by providing student-specific information in the parent portal of the district's Student Information Management System.

This information will be updated at least bi-weekly by the District's Data Department.

Out of Zone Placements

Students who move from one geographical zone to the other in the city may request to remain in the school they presently are attending until the end of the school year in which they enrolled in the school prior to change of address provided that:

- The ethnicity balance of the school is not adversely affected

- The parent provides transportation to and from school or the child's transportation needs can be accommodated by existing school bus routes
- The student is not chronically absent or excessively tardy

The Attendance Supervisor shall **recommend** if a student is not eligible for out of zone placement, based on this requirement. Such a finding may result in a student being placed at a school in their geographical zone. The transfer must be approved by the Chief Equity Officer.

Parents/legal guardians may request a school of choice outside the zone in which they reside based on their child care needs provided that:

- There is space available at the grade level at the school
- The ethnicity balance of the school is not adversely affected
- The parent provides transportation to and from the school
- The student is not chronically absent or excessively tardy

The Attendance Supervisor shall **recommend** if a student is not eligible for out of zone placement, based on this requirement. Such a finding may result in a student being placed at a school in their geographical zone. The transfer must be approved by the Chief Equity Officer.

Students who move from one geographical zone to the other will be removed from all waitlists in their previous zone. At the time of registration, families may choose to be placed on waitlists for schools in their new zone.

Transfers

Once a student has attended a school, a parent who is dissatisfied with the assignment may request a voluntary transfer. Only one transfer per year is allowed and must be requested through the Family Resource Center before the 20th day of school or no later than forty-five (45) calendar days after the initial placement of the student in the school. Voluntary transfer requests will be honored if there are available seats.

Transfers requested after the 20th day of school will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the Chief Equity Officer.

Middle School Feeder Pattern

The middle school feeder pattern which determines school assignment from the terminal grade of elementary school – fourth grade - to the entry grade of middle school - fifth grade - is currently under review and the enrollment policy for middle schools will be included in the 2022-23 school assignment policy. All current fourth graders enrolling in the fifth grade for the 2021-22 school year will follow the current feeder pattern designated by the district and posted on the Lowell Public Schools website.

Grades 9-12

Students wishing to enroll in Lowell High School or the Career Academy, a full-service Community High School, may do so at the Family Resource Center.

All high school students are encouraged to bring with them, at the time of enrollment, their current transcripts. Missing transcripts will delay the development of a full and accurate schedule but will not delay students from attending the high school.

House placements will take into consideration McKinney-Vento, Foster Care, Special Education needs, gender, and English Language Learner status, to ensure students in all houses are being placed equitably.

Appeals

Any appeal of a placement decision must be made in writing, addressed to the Chief Officer for Equity and Engagement **within 10 days of said placement decision.**